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HOUSTON (AP) -- CIA DIRECTOR GEORGE BUSH SAID TODAY HE BELIEVES THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SUPPORT THE CONCEPT OF A STRONG CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

"IF THEY DON'T, THEY'D BETTER BECAUSE WE ARE LIVING IN AN EXTREMELY TROUBLED WORLD," BUSH SAID.

BUSH, WHO IS FROM HOUSTON, WAS MAKING HIS FIRST APPEARANCE HERE SINCE HIS RECENT APPOINTMENT TO HEAD THE CIA. HE HELD A NEWS CONFERENCE AND ADDRESSED THE GREATER HOUSTON AREA YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

BUSH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOME ABUSES WERE ALLOWED TO EXIST FOR MANY YEARS WITHIN THE AGENCY, BUT HE SAID THESE HAVE BEEN CORRECTED.

"I WOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THE IMAGE OF THE CIA IS NOT WHAT IT SHOULD BE BECAUSE OF THE DISCLOSURES, BECAUSE OF SOME REAL ABUSES AND BECAUSE OF MANY ALLEGED ABUSES THAT JUST DON'T HAPPEN TO BE TRUE," HE SAID.

"I THINK THE AGENCY IS IN GOOD SHAPE. I THINK WE HAVE THE BASIC CONFIDENCE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. I THINK WE STILL HAVE TO BE AWARE WE ARE LIVING IN A CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM AND MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO THE PEOPLE."

HE SAID THIS MEANS MORE DISCLOSURES TO THE CONGRESS AND MORE COOPERATION WITH CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.

"BUT IT ALSO MEANS YOU CANNOT CONDUCT IT TOTALLY IN THE OPEN," HE SAID. "SOME THINGS MUST REMAIN SECRET. I WILL DEFEND THE AGENCY BUT IF I FIND THINGS WRONG I WILL CLEAN THEM UP."

BUSH SAID THERE HAVE BEEN PROVEN ALLEGATIONS OF SURVEILLANCE OF AMERICANS IN THE PAST BUT THAT IS NOT HAPPENING AT PRESENT.

"WE DO HAVE SOME DOMESTIC OPERATIONS," HE SAID. "THEY ARE VERY OPEN. PEOPLE COME BACK FROM BUSINESS TRIPS AND ARE DECODED AND I HOPE THEY WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE WITH THE CIA. BUT IN TERMS OF DOMESTIC SURVEILLANCE, WE ARE NOT IN THAT BUSINESS."

05-08-76 13:20EDT